DEALING WITH WORRIES AND STRESS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate, the Master of the Day of Judgement. I bear witness that there is no god but He, the Lord of the earlier and later generations and Sustainer of heaven and earth. Peace and blessings be upon the one who was sent as a Mercy to the worlds. I bear witness that he is the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Peace and blessings be upon him, upon all his Family and Companions, and upon those who believe in his guidance and follow in his footsteps until the Day of Judgement.

It is the nature of this life that people will suffer from worries and stress, because this world is the place of disease, hardship and suffering. Hence among the things that distinguish Paradise from this world is the fact that there is no worry or stress

there: *"No sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave."* [al-Hijr 15:48 – interpretation of the meaning]. Nothing ever upsets the people of Paradise, not even the slightest word: *"No laghw (dirty, false, evil vain talk) will they hear therein, nor any sinful speech (like backbiting, etc.), but only the saying of Salaam! Salaam! (greetings with peace)."* [al-Waaqi'ah 56:25-26 – interpretation of the meaning].

It is also the nature of this life that people have to put up with suffering and hardship for various reasons, as is indicated in the Qur'aan (interpretation of the meaning): *"Verily, We have created man in toil."* [al-Balad 90:4]. So people feel regret for what has happened in the past, anxious about what may happen in the future, and worried about what is going on in the present.

The things that cross our minds and make us feel distressed are things in the past that have caused grief, things in the future that we are worried about, and things in the present which concern us.

People react differently to stress and worries, depending on how many things are concerning them, whether the worry is continuous or not, and on whether they have faith in their hearts or are rebellious and sinful. We may describe people's hearts as being of two types: either the heart is the throne of Allaah, filled with light, life, happiness, joy and all the treasures of goodness; or it is the throne of Shaytaan, wherein is distress, darkness, death, grief, worry and anxiety.

People's worries and concerns will also differ, according to the differences in their motivations, circumstances and individual responsibilities.

One type of worry or concern is that which may be described as **worthwhile worries** that are a good sign, such as a scholar's anxiety to resolve difficult issues concerning which the Muslims need an answer – especially when the matter is very serious and there appears to be no solution. Another example is the concern of the Muslim leader about the problems of the people under his care. This is what made the two 'Umars

(i.e. ʻUmar ibn al-Khattaab and ʻUmar ibn ʻAbd al-ʻAzeez) and other leaders worried and anxious. ʻUmar ibn al-Khattaab used to think about how to prepare the army whilst he was praying, and he was excused for that; he also used to worry about the animals stumbling in the land of ʻIraaq. ʻUmar ibn ʻAbd al-ʻAzeez used to express his suffering thus: "I am dealing with something with which no one could help me except Allaah. The elderly have reached the ends of their lives with it (in this situation), the youth have grown up with it; the foreigners have learnt Arabic and the Bedouin have migrated to the cities in these circumstances. [It is so well-entrenched] that they think this is religion, and they can see the truth nowhere else but in this." When the *khilaafah* passed to him and the people gave their *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance) to him, he came home, feeling anxious and stressed. His freed slave said to him: "Why do I see you so anxious and stressed? This is not how you should be on such an occasion as this." He said, "Woe to you! How could I not be anxious when there is no one in the East nor the West of this *ummah* who is not demanding his rights of me or asking me to help settle some matter with another person, whether he writes down his request or not, whether he asks me directly or not?"

The more any decision had to do with the fate of the Muslims, the greater the anxiety and stress involved. Hence when ʻAbd al-Rahmaan ibn ʻAwf was entrusted with the task of selecting the next *khaleefah* for the Muslims, after the death of ʻUmar, he did not sleep during that period, because he was so busy consulting the Muslims, even the old women.

Other types of commendable concern include: the concern of the *dai'yah* who is striving to spread Islam and convey the message, guiding others to the path of Guidance; the concern of the worshipper to ensure that his worship is correct both in intention and practice; and the concern of the Muslim for the suffering of his brothers in faith throughout the world…

Kinds of anxieties that may result from committing sin include: the distress suffered after shedding blood wrongfully; or the anxiety of a woman who is pregnant as a result of fornication or adultery.

Kinds of distress that result from wrongful treatment at the hands of others include that suffered because of mistreatment by one's own relatives, as the poet said: "The wrong suffered at the hands of those who are closely-related is more painful to bear than a blow from a powerful sword."

Distress suffered because of the calamities that happen in this world include: chronic or serious diseases, disobedience of children towards their parents, hostility on the part of one's wife or mistreatment on the part of one's husband.

Some kinds of anxiety result from fears about what may lie ahead in the future, for example a father may be worried about what will happen to his children after he dies, especially if they are weak and he has nothing to leave behind for them.

These are a few examples of different kinds of stress and worry. We will discuss the matter in further detail below:

KINDS OF STRESS AND WORRY

The distress suffered by the dai'yah when he calls his people to Islam

The Prophets had more than their fair share of this kind of stress. 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) told her nephew (the son of her sister) 'Urwah that she asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "Did you ever suffer any day worse than the day of Uhud?" He said: "I suffered what I suffered at the hands of your people, and the worst that I suffered from them was on the day of 'Aqabah, when I had made an appeal to Ibn 'Abd Yaalayl ibn 'Abd Kalaal and he did not respond in the way I had hoped for. I left him, hardly knowing where I was going, and I did not realize where I was until I had reached Qarn al-Tha'aalib. I raised my head, and saw a cloud which was shading me. I looked in it, and saw Jibraa'eel, who called to me and said: 'Allaah has heard what your people have said to you, and their response to you. He has sent to you the Angel of the Mountains, to do whatever you

tell him to do to them.' Then the Angel of the Mountains called to me, greeted me, and said, 'O Muhammad, if you wish, I will crush them between two mountains.'" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "Rather, I hope that Allaah will bring forth from their descendents people who will worship Allaah alone and not associate anything with Him."

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) suffered similar distress when his people disbelieved his account of his Night Journey (*Israa'*). Muslim (may Allaah have mercy on him) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I found myself in the Hijr (an area in the *Haram* in Makkah, near the Ka'bah), and Quryash were asking me about my Night Journey, questions about Bayt al-Maqdis that I was not sure of. I felt more distressed and anxious than I had ever felt, then Allaah raised it for me so that I could see what they were asking me about and answer all their questions…"

Concern about acts of worship

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was very concerned about telling people about *salaat* (prayer). Abu 'Umayr ibn Anas reported from his (paternal) uncles among the Ansaar that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was worried about how to gather the people together for prayers. Someone suggested that he set up a flag, so that people would see it and tell one another, but he did not like this idea. Another suggestion was a ram's horn (the *shofar* of the Jews), but he did not like this idea, and said, "This belongs to the Jews." Someone else suggested a bell, but he said, "This belongs to the Christians." 'Abd-Allaah ibn Zayd ibn 'Abd Rabbihi went away, worrying about the concern of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and he was shown the *adhaan* (call to prayer) in a dream. The next morning he came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and told him about it: "O Messenger of Allaah, whilst I was half asleep and half awake, someone came to me and showed me the *adhaan*…"

The anxiety faced by the truthful person when he is disbelieved

This happened to the great *Sahaabi* Zayd ibn al-Arqam (may Allaah be pleased with him), when he heard the chief of the *munaafiqeen* (hypocrites) saying to his colleagues: "When we return to Madeenah, the one who has pride and power will expel the one who is humiliated" (meaning that the "one who has pride and power" was himself, and the "one who is humilated" was the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the people with him). Zayd said: "I told my (paternal) uncle, and he went and informed the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) sent for (the chief of the *munaafiqeen,* 'Abd-Allaah ibn Ubayy), who swore that he had said no such thing. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) believed him and not me. My uncle came to me and scolded me: "All you wanted was for the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the Muslims to hate you and disbelieve you!" I felt extreme anxiety and stress, such as no one has ever suffered. When I was on a journey with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), I hung my head with worry. Then the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came up to me, tweaked my ear, and smiled at me. I felt happy in a way that I would not exchange immortal life in this world for that feeling. Then Abu Bakr caught up with me and asked me what the Messenger of Allaah had said to me. I said, 'He did not say anything, but he tweaked my ear and smiled at me.' He told me, ' Be of good cheer!' Then 'Umar caught up with me and I told him what I had told Abu Bakr. The next morning, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recited *Soorat al-Munaafiqoon* to us.'"

According to a report narrated by Muslim, which tells the same story, Zayd said: "I came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and told him about it. He sent for 'Abd-Allaah ibn Ubayy and asked him about it, but he insisted and swore that he had done no such thing, saying, 'Zayd is telling lies to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).' I felt very hurt because of what they said, until Allaah revealed words confirming that I had spoken the truth

(interpretation of the meaning): '*When the hypocrites come to you…*' [al-Munaafiqoon 63:1]"

The anxiety suffered by an innocent person when false accusations are made

An example of this is what happened to 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) when the *munaafiqoon* accused her of sin during the campaign of Muraysi'. She was ill, and when she heard the news of the rumours from one of the women of her household, she became even sicker, and felt very distressed. She said: "I said, 'Subhaan-Allaah! Are people talking about that?' I wept all night, until morning, and never slept; my tears never stopped falling. Then I wept all day, and never slept; my tears never stopped falling. My parents came to me the next morning, after I had cried for two nights and a day, without ceasing and without sleeping. They thought that this weeping would kill me. Whilst they were sitting with me, and I was crying, a woman of the Ansaar asked permission to see me. I gave her permission, and she sat down, weeping with me. Whilst we were sitting thus, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came in, greeted us, and sat down. He had not come to visit me since the rumours had started, and for a month there had been no Revelation concerning my situation. Whilst he was sitting there, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recited the *Shahaadah*, then he said: 'O 'Aa'ishah, I have heard such-and-such about you. If you are innocent, Allaah will prove your innocence, and if you did commit a sin, then ask for Allaah's forgiveness and repent to Him, for when the slave admits his sin and repents to Allaah, Allaah will accept his repentance. When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had finished what he had to say, my tears stopped completely, and I said to my father: 'Respond to what the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has said.' He said, 'By Allaah, I do not know what I should say to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).' I said to my mother: 'Respond to what the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has said.' She said, 'By Allaah, I do not know what I should say to

the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).' I said: 'I am only a young girl and I do not know much of the Qur'aan. By Allaah, I have nothing to say to you except the words of the father of Yoosuf: "… *So (for me) patience is most fitting. And it is Allaah (Alone) Whose help can be sought against that which you assert.*" [Yoosuf 12:18].' Then I turned away and lay down on my bed. Then Allaah revealed (interpretation of the meaning): '*Verily! Those who brought forth the slander (against 'Aa'ishah) are a group among you. Consider it not a bad thing for you…*'" [al-Noor 24:11 – see complete passage, aayat 11 to 20].

Before 'Aa'ishah's time, Maryam bint 'Imraan had suffered a great deal of stress and anxiety because she became pregnant without being married. Her distress reached such an extent that: "…*She said: 'Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!*'" [Maryam 19:23 – interpretation of the meaning]. She spoke thus because she knew that people would accuse her and not believe her when she came to them with a child in her arms, because she had been one of the devoted female worshippers who lived in seclusion close to the mosque, and she came from a very religious household and was descended from Prophets. Because of all this, she bore such a great burden of anxiety that she wished that she had died before this happened to her, or that she "had been forgotten and out of sight," in other words, that she had never been created at all.

Another example is the story of the women who was accused unjustly. 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) told her story: "A black woman who belonged to some of the Arabs became Muslim. She had a cubicle in the mosque. She used to come to us and talk with us, and when she had finished conversing with us, she told us: 'The day of the *wishaah* (an ornamented girdle worn by women) was one of the wonders of our Lord. Indeed, it is He Who saved me from the land of *kufr* (disbelief).'" When she repeated this several times, 'Aa'ishah asked her, "What was the day of the girdle?" She said: "A young girl who belonged to some of my people went out wearing a girdle made of leather. She dropped it, and a kite (a kind of hawk) came and swooped it up, thinking that it was a piece of meat. They accused me of taking it, and they began to punish me, to the extent that they even searched my private parts. Whilst they were

surrounding me and I was in that state of distress, the kite flew back over our heads and dropped the belt. They picked it up, and I said to them: ‘This is what you accused me of, and I was innocent!’”

A man’s worry about what may happen to his wife and children after his death

‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say: “One of the things that concerns me is what will happen to you [his wives] after my death, for none will be able to take care of you properly except those who are truly patient.”

Anxiety because of a loan

An example of this is what happened to al-Zubayr (may Allaah be pleased with him), whose story was told by his son ‘Abd-Allaah ibn al-Zubayr: “When al-Zubayr stood up to fight at the Battle of the Camel, he called me, so I went and stood by his side. He said: ‘O my son, no-one will be killed today except one who is a wrongdoer or one to whom wrong is done. I can see that I will die today as one to whom wrong is done. My greatest concern is my debts – do you think that any of our wealth will be left after paying off our debts? O my son, sell our property and pay off our debts.’” ‘Abd-Allaah said: “He started to advise me what to do about his debt, and told me: ‘O my son, if you are unable to pay off anything, seek the help of my *mawlaa*.’ By Allaah, I did not know what he meant until I asked, ‘O my father, who is your *mawlaa*?’ He said: ‘Allaah.’ By Allaah, every time I felt distress because of difficulty in paying off his debt, I prayed, ‘O *Mawlaa* of al-Zubayr, pay off his debt,’ and Allaah paid it off…’” ‘Abd-Allaah ibn al-Zubayr said: “I calculated how much he owed, and found it to be two million and two hundred thousand… (some of al-Zubayr’s friends did not think it possible to pay off such a great debt, but Allaah greatly blessed some land belonging to al-Zubayr, and surprisingly enough, when it was divided up and sold off, there was

enough to pay off the debt and have something left over)…Al-Zubayr had four wives: one-third of his wealth was put aside for them, and each wife got one million and two hundred thousand. The total sum of his wealth was fifty million and two hundred thousand."

Anxiety caused by dreams

This happened to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as he said: "Whilst I was sleeping, the treasures of the earth were brought to me, and two armlets of gold were placed on my arms. That distressed me, but Allaah revealed to me that I should blow them away, so I did so, and they disappeared. I interpreted them as being the two liars whom I am facing, the one in Sana'aa' and the one in al-Yamaamah."

Ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father) also felt distress because of a dream which he saw. He told us about it: "Some men among the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to see dreams at the time of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). They used to tell him about them, and he would say '*Ma sha' Allaah*.' I was a young boy, and I used to live in the mosque before I got married. I said to myself, 'If you were any good, you would have seen something like these people have seen.' When I lay down that night, I said, 'O Allaah, if You see any good in me, then let me see a dream.' Then two angels came to me, each of whom was holding an iron bridle in his hand. They dragged me to Hell, and I was praying, 'O Allaah, I seek refuge with you from Hell.' Then I dreamt that I was met by another angel, who was also holding an iron bridle in his hand. He said, 'Do not worry, you are a good man, if only you prayed more.' They took me to the edge of Hell, and it was shaped like a well with horns; between every two horns was an angel holding an iron bridle. I saw in it men suspended upside down from chains, and I recognized some men of Quraysh. Then they led me off towards the right. I told Hafsah about it, and Hafsah told the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). (According to a report narrated by Muslim: "When I woke up, I felt worried and scared about what I

had seen, so I asked Hafsah about it, and she said, 'It is good, what you have seen.' I said to her, 'Ask the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about it,' so she asked him.") The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ' 'Abd-Allaah is a righteous man, if only he prayed at night.'" Naafi' said: "After that, he always prayed a great deal."

Islam prescribes a number of ways to deal with the distress that results from seeing nightmares and frightening dreams.

Having described a number of kinds of distress and anxiety experienced in this world, we will now discuss ways of dealing with them.

Undoubtedly the first thing we should mention when discussing worries and anxiety is: *'aqeedah* (belief) and *eeman* (faith), and the effects they have on dealing with stress. One can see many of the *kuffaar* and Muslims who are weak in faith suffering breakdowns and committing suicide in an effort to rid themselves of depression, frustration and despair when they get into trouble or when disaster strikes. Hospitals are full of patients who are suicidal or have suffered nervous breakdowns, or other kinds of psychological trauma. These problems affect many of those who are strong, let alone those who are weak. How often they lead to complete incapacity and loss of sanity!

The person who has been guided to Islam, if his *'aqeedah* is sound and his *eemaan* is strong, will find the cure in that which has come from Allaah, the All-Knowing and All-Aware, Who created all things and Who knows best what befits His creation. "*Should not He Who has created know? And He is the Most Kind and Courteous (to His slaves) All-Aware (of everything).*" [al-Mulk 67:14 – interpretation of the meaning].

ISLAM'S TREATMENT FOR ANXIETY AND WORRY

Let us now discuss some of the different kinds of remedies and treatments taught by Islam:

1. Equipping oneself with eemaan (faith), accompanied by righteous deeds

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer, verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world, with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e., Paradise in the Hereafter)."* [al-Nahl 16:97]

The reason for this is clear: the believers in Allaah whose faith is correct and motivates them to do righteous deeds that reform their hearts and characters, and change their status in this world and the next, have the basic principles according to which they deal with every kind of joy and grief that they may face. They receive blessings and joys with acceptance and thanksgiving, and put them to use in beneficial ways. When they do this, they feel happy and hope that it will last and will bring them reward for their gratitude, as well as other things that will supercede the original goodness and blessings.

When faced with distress, harm, worries and anxieties, they try to resist them and reduce them as much as they can, and they react with befitting patience to the things in which they have no choice. They gain a lot of benefits as a result, such as: resilience and toughness as is appropriate; useful experience, strong willpower, patience, the hope of reward, and many other benefits which reduce the distress felt. Thus their anxiety is replaced with joy and the hope of blessings and reward from Allaah, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stated in the saheeh hadeeth: "How marvellous is the affair of the believer! Everything that happens to him is good, and this does not apply to anyone except the believer. If

something good befalls him, he gives thanks for it, and that is good for him. If something bad befalls him, he bears it with patience, and that is good for him."

This is the way in which we may view calamities in a positive light. Another example is:

2. Thinking of how the Muslim may earn expiation for his sins, purify his heart and raise his status, when he is stricken with distress and worry in this life.

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Nothing of fatigue, illness, distress, worry, grief or harm befalls the Muslim, not even a prick from a thorn, but Allaah will accept it as expiation for some of his sins." According to a report narrated by Muslim: "No illness, fatigue, sickness or grief befalls the Muslim, not even worries, but it will be an expiation for some of his sins."

The one who is distressed or worried should know that whatever psychological pain afflicts him is not wasted, but serves a purpose in increasing his *hasanaat* (good deeds) and expiating for his *sayi'aat* (bad deeds). The Muslim should realize that if it were not for disasters and afflictions, we would come empty-handed on the Day of Resurrection, as some of the *salaf* (early generations of Islam) pointed out, which is why they would rejoice when misfortune struck just as we rejoice at times of ease.

When a person understands how the disasters that befall him expiate for his sins, he will rejoice and be of good cheer, especially if that happens to him straight after he has committed a sin, as happened to some of the Sahaabah, may Allaah be pleased with them. 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mughaffal (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that a man met a woman who had been a prostitute during the time of *Jaahiliyyah*. He started to joke with her, then he touched her. She told him, "Watch it! Allaah has destroyed *shirk* (once 'Affaan said: has destroyed *Jaahiliyyah*) and has brought us Islam." The man went away, and walked into a wall, cutting his face. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came along, so the man told him what

had happened, and he said: "You are a slave for whom Allah wishes good. When Allaah wishes good for His slave, He hastens the punishment for his sin; when He does not wish good for His slave, he withholds the punishment until the matter is settled on the Day of Resurrection, when all of his sins will be brought forth together."

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "When Allaah wishes good for His slave, He hastens to bring about his punishment in this world, and if He does not wish good for him, He withholds the punishment until he is dealt with for his sin on the Day of Resurrection."

3. Understanding the reality of this world

The believer knows that this world is only temporary, that its luxuries are few, and that whatever pleasures exist here are always imperfect. If it causes a little laughter, it gives many reasons to weep; if it gives a little, it withholds far more. The believer is only detained here, as the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "This world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the kaafir."

This world is also fatigue, pain, misery and suffering, so the believer feels relief when he departs from it. Abu Qutaadah ibn Rib'i al-Ansaari used to say that a funeral passed the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he said: "He is now relieved, and people feel relieved of him." The people asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, how can he be relieved and people feel relieved of him?" He said, "The believing slave (who dies) is relieved of the fatigue and pain of this world and has gone to the mercy of Allaah; when the rebellious slave dies, people, land, trees and animals are relieved of him."

For the believer, death brings a respite from the distress, worries and pain of this life, as is stated in the hadeeth: "When the believer is about to die, the angels of mercy bring white silk and say, 'Come out content, with the pleasure of Allaah upon you, to

the mercy of Allaah and sweet fragrance and a Lord who is not angry.’ So (the soul) comes out like the best fragrance of musk and the angels hand it to one another until they bring it to the gate of heaven. They say, ‘How good is this fragrance that has come from the earth.’ They bring it to the souls of the believers, and they rejoice over it much more than you do when one who has been absent returns. They ask him, ‘What did So-and-so do? What did So-and-so do?’ then (the angels) say, ‘Leave him alone, for he was suffering the distress of the world.’ When he asks, ‘Did not So-and-so come to you?’ they say: ‘He was taken to his home in the Pit (i.e., Hell).’ When the kaafir is about to die, angels of punishment bring sackcloth and say, ‘Come out discontent, with the wrath of Allaah upon you, to the punishment of Allaah.’ So (the soul) comes out like the worst stench of rotten meat, and they take it to the gate of the earth. They say, ‘How foul is this stench,’ until they bring it to the souls of the kuffaar.”

This understanding of the reality of this world makes it easier for the believer to bear afflictions, pains, distress and anxiety, because he knows that they are an inevitable part of the nature of this life.

4. Following the examples of the Prophets and the righteous

The Prophets and the righteous suffered more distress in this world than other people. Each person is tested according to the strength of his faith. If Allaah loves a person, He tests him. Sa’d (may Allaah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “O Messenger of Allaah, which of the people suffers the most distress?” He said: “The Prophets, then those who come after them (in terms of status), then those who come after them. A man will be tested according to the strength of his faith. If his faith is strong, then the distress with which he is tried will be greater; if his faith is weak, he will be tested in accordance with the level of his faith. Distress will keep on befalling the slave until he walks on the face of the earth free from sin.”

5. Making the Hereafter one's main concern

The concerns of this world overwhelm and confuse people, but if the slave makes the Hereafter his main concern, Allaah will help him to focus and be determined, as was narrated by Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him): "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Whoever has the Hereafter as his main concern, Allaah will fill his heart with a feeling of richness and independence; he will be focused and feel content, and this world will come to him in spite of it. Whoever has this world as his main concern, Allaah will cause him to feel constant fear of poverty; he will be distracted and unfocused, and he will have nothing of this world except what was already predestined for him.'"

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "When a person spends his entire day with no other concern but Allaah alone, Allaah, may He be glorified, will take care of all his needs and take care of all that is worrying him; He will empty his heart so that it will be filled only with love for Him, free his tongue so that it will speak only in remembrance of Him (*dhikr*) and cause all his faculties to work only in obedience to Him. But if a person spends his entire day with no other concern but this world, Allaah will make him bear its distress, anxiety and pain; He will leave him to sort himself out, and cause his heart to be distracted from the love of Allaah towards the love of some created being, cause his tongue to speak only in remembrance of that creation instead of remembering Allaah, and cause his faculties to work in obeying and serving them. So he will strive hard, labouring like some work-animal, to serve something other than Allaah… Everyone who turns away from being a true slave of Allaah and obeying Him and loving Him will be burdened with servitude, love and obedience to some created being. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): '*And whosoever turns away (blinds himself) from the remembrance of the Most Beneficent (Allaah), We appoint for him a shaytaan (devil) to be a qareen (intimate companion) to him.*' [al-Zukhruf 43:36]."

6. A surprisingly effective remedy: remembering death

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Remember frequently the one who will destroy all your pleasures: death, for there is no-one who remembers death when in straitened circumstances, but his situation will become easier, and there is no-one who remembers death during times of ease, but his circumstances will become straitened."

7. Praying to Allaah, may He be exalted

Du'aa' (prayer or supplication) is very beneficial, and includes both protection and treatment. As far as protection in concerned, the Muslim is obliged to turn to Allaah and pray to Him for refuge from distress and to keep him away from it, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to do. His servant Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) tells us: "I used to serve the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he stayed in Madeenah (i.e. was not travelling). I often used to hear him saying: *'**Allaahumma inni a'oodhu bika min al-hamm wa'l-hazn wa'l-'ajz wa'l-kasal wa'l-bukhl wa'l-jubn wa dala' al-dayn wa ghalbat al-rijaal*** (O Allaah, I seek refuge with You from distress, grief, incapacity, laziness, miserliness, cowardice, the burden of debt and from being overpowered by men).'"

This *du'aa'* is very effective in preventing distress before it happens; prevention is better, and easier, than cure.

When one is worried about what may happen in the future, the following *du'aa'* is very beneficial. Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say: "***Allaahumma aslih li deeni alladhi huwa 'ismat amri wa aslih li dunyaaya allati fihaa ma'aashi wa aslih li aakhirati allati fihaa ma'aadi w'aj'al al-hayaata ziyaadatan li fi kulli khayri w'aj'al al-mawta raahatan li min kulli sharr*** (O Allaah, make me adhere properly to my religion, on which all my affairs depend; make this world good for me in which is my livelihood; make my Hereafter good for me, in which is my ultimate

destiny; make my life increase in every good thing and make my death a respite from every evil)."

When distress and pain befall a person, the door of *du'aa'* is always open to him; it is never closed. When one calls upon the Most Generous, He will respond and give. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"And when My slaves ask you concerning Me, then (answer them), I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright."* [al-Baqarah 2:186]

One of the greatest *du'aa's* which take away distress and anxiety and bring joy is the famous *du'aa'* which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) encouraged everyone who hears it to learn it by heart:

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "There is no-one who is afflicted by distress and grief, and says: ***'Allaahumma inni 'abduka ibn 'abdika ibn amatija naasyati bi yadika, maada fiyya hukmuka, 'adlun fiyya qadaa'uka. As'aluka bi kulli ismin huwa laka sammayta bihi nafsaka aw anzaltahu fi kitaabika aw 'allamtahu ahadan min khalqika aw ista'tharta bihi fi 'ilm il-ghayb 'indaka an taj'al al-Qur'aana rabee' qalbi wa noor sadri wa jalaa' huzni wa dhihaab hammi*** (O Allaah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your maidservant; my forelock is in Your hand, Your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You which You have named Yourself with, or revealed in Your Book, or You taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the Unseen with You, that You make the Qur'aan the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety),' but Allaah will take away his distress and grief, and replace it with joy." He was asked: "O Messenger of Allaah, should we learn this?" He said: "Of course; everyone who hears it should learn it."

This important hadeeth indicates the following: the slave should admit that he belongs to Allaah and that he cannot do without Him and has no other master than Allaah; that he should be a slave to Allaah, announce his submission to Him, obey His commandments and heed His prohibitions; that Allaah is directing and controlling him as He wills; that he should demonstrate his submission to Allaah and his acceptance of His decree; that he should pray to Allaah, using all His Names, then ask for what he needs.

A number of other *du'aa's* to do with distress and anxiety have also been narrated in the Sunnah. They include the following:

Ibn 'Abbaas reported that when the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) felt distressed, he would say: ***"Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah al-'Azeem al-Haleem, laa ilaaha ill-Allaah Rabb al-'Arsh al-'azeem, la ilaaha ill-Allaah Rabb al-samawaat wa Rabb al-ard wa Rabb al-'Arsh al-kareem*** (There is no god but Allaah, the All-Powerful, the Forbearing; there is no god but Allaah, Lord of the mighty Throne; there is no god but Allaah, Lord of heaven, Lord of earth, and Lord of the noble Throne)."

Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that when the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was distressed by something, he would say: "***Yaa Hayyu yaa Qayyoom bi rahmatika astagheeth*** (O Ever-Living, O Eternal, by Your mercy I seek help)."

Asmaa' bint 'Umayr said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to me: 'Shall I not teach you some words which you can say at times of distress? '***Allaah Allaah rabbee laa ushriku bihi shay'an*** (Allaah Allaah is my Lord, I do not associate anything with Him).'"

Another of the beneficial *du'aa's* which the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) taught us is the one he told us about when he said: "The *du'aa'* of the person who is in distress is: '***Allaahumma rahmataka arjoo fa laa***

takilni ilaa nafsi tarfat 'ayn w'aslih li sha'ni kullahu laa ilaaha illa anta (O Allaah, for Your mercy I hope, so do not leave me in charge of my affairs even for the blink of an eye; rectify all my affairs. There is no god except You)'"

If a person thinks about the meaning of these *du'aa's* and prays with concentration and a sincere intention, doing all those things that can help to bring about a response, Allaah will fulfil his hopes and do the things asked for; He will turn his distress into joy.

If the *du'aa'* comes from a heart which is filled with faith, it will dispel worry and bring comfort. The scholars have mentioned many stories of people who prayed to Allaah in times of calamity and distress, and Allaah responded to their prayer and saved them from an enemy, or from drowning, or from starvation or disaster. One example is the story of what happened to the great Sahaabi al-'Alaa al-Hadrami, who was one of the most prominent scholars and devoted worshippers, one of the close friends (*awliyaa'*) of Allaah whose *du'aa's* are answered. During the campaign against the apostates of Bahrain, he pitched camp, but before the people could settle down, the camels bolted, carrying away all the provisions of the army, including their tents and water, leaving them with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. It was night-time, and they could not restrain even one camel. The people were filled with indescribable distress and alarm, and some of them began making wills to one another (because they felt that death was inevitable). Al-'Alaa' called the people together and said: "O people, are you not Muslims? Are you not striving for the sake of Allaah? Are you not the *ansaar* (supporters) of Allaah?" They said, "Of course." He said, "Then be of good cheer, for Allaah will not forsake anyone who is in your situation." When the time for Fajr prayer came, he called the people to pray and led them in prayer, then he knelt up, and the people did likewise. He started to pray (make du'aa'), raising his hands, and the people did likewise. They prayed until the sun rose, and the people began to look at the mirages caused by the sun, shimmering one after another, all the while fervently praying. When he reached the third [??], Allaah created a great stream of fresh water beside them. ['Alaa'] walked towards it, and the people followed him, then they drank and washed themselves. Before the sun had

reached its zenith, the camels started to come back from all directions, bringing the supplies loaded on them, so the people did not lose anything at all, and they were able to give water to the camels. This is one of the signs of Allaah witnessed by the people during that campaign. (*Al-Bidaayah wa'l-Nihaayah: Dhikr riddat ahl al-Bahrayn wa 'awdatihim*).

8. Praying for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) (i.e., saying "Allaahumma salli 'ala Muhammad," etc.)

This is one of the greatest ways through which Allaah may relieve worries:
Al-Tufayl ibn Ubayy ibn Ka'b reported that his father said: "When two-thirds of the night had passed, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) got up and said: 'O people, remember Allaah, remember Allaah. The first blowing of the Trumpet has come, and will be followed by the second blowing. Death has come, with all that it implies, death has come with all that it implies.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allaah, I pray a lot for you. How much of my prayers should I devote to you?' He said, 'As much as you want.' I said, 'A quarter?' He said, 'As much as you want, and if you increase it, it will be good for you.' I said, 'Half?' He said, 'As much as you want, and if you increase it, it will be good for you.' I said, 'Two-thirds?' He said, 'As much as you want, and if you increase it, it will be good for you.' I said, 'I will devote all my prayer to you.' He said, 'Then your worries will be taken care of and your sin will be forgiven.'"

9. Relying upon Allaah and entrusting matters to Him

"When a person knows that Allaah is Able to do all things, that He alone makes choices for His slaves and runs their affairs, that the way He runs His slave's affairs is better than the way the slave would do it for himself, that He knows better about the slave's interests than the slave does, that He is more able to achieve them, that He is more sincere and more merciful towards His slave than the slave is to himself; and

also knows that he cannot progress or regress any further than the limits that Allaah has decreed for him, for nobody can change the will and decree of Allaah – when a person knows all this, he will submit himself to his Lord and hand over his affairs to Him, throwing himself before his Lord like a weak slave throwing himself before a mighty and powerful king. Allaah deals with His slave as He wishes, and the slave has nothing to do with it. Only after he has submitted thus will the slave feel relief from his distress, worries and regrets. He gives the burden of his needs and interests to One Who is not concerned about how heavy or great the burden is. Allaah will take care of it, instead of him, and will show him His kindness and mercy, without the slave getting tired or worried, because all his concern is now focused on Allaah alone. His worry about his needs and interests in this world has been lifted from him and his heart is now free of this concern. How good his life is now, how blessed his heart and how great his happiness and joy!

But as for the person who insists on running his own affairs and making his own choices, whose concern is only for his own share and not for his duties towards his Lord, Allaah will leave him alone with the choices he has made, so he will be surrounded by concerns, worries, distress, grief, fear, exhaustion and depression. His thoughts will be confused, none of his deeds will be pure and none of his hopes will be fulfilled. He will gain no respite, and will enjoy no pleasure. He will never feel joy or contentment. He will be labouring like a working-animal, with no hope of gaining anything that could help him in the Hereafter."

"When a person relies upon Allaah and puts his trust in Him, he is not controlled by bad illusions. He trusts in Allaah and hopes for bounty from Him, which protects him from distress and worry, as well as many psychological and physical diseases. Thus his heart gains indescribable strength, relaxation and joy. The one who is truly free from problems is the one whom Allaah has freed and helped to strive against his own-self (*jihaad al-nafs*) by seeking beneficial means of strengthening his heart and dispelling anxiety. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "… *And whosoever puts his trust in Allaah, then He will suffice him*…" [al-Talaaq 65:3] – i.e., He will take care of

everything that is of concern to him, whether it has to do with his religion or his worldly affairs.

The person who relies on Allaah is strong in heart and is not adversely affected by illusions or things that happen, because he knows that this is a sign of weakness and fear that is unfounded. He also knows that Allaah has guaranteed to take complete care of the one who puts his trust in Him, so he trusts Allaah and has confidence in His promise. Thus his worries and anxiety disappear, hardship is replaced with ease, sadness turns to joy and fear turns to a feeling of security. We ask Allaah to keep us safe and to bless us with strength of heart and steadfastness through complete reliance on Him, for He has guaranteed all goodness and protection from all evil and harm to those who put their trust in Him."

10. Other ways of dispelling distress and anxiety include paying attention to what is beneficial, focusing on what matters today and no longer worrying about what may happen tomorrow or regretting what happened yesterday

Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) sought refuge with Allaah from worry and regret: regret for things that have happened in the past which one cannot go back and change, and worries about what may happen in the future. The slave should think only about the present, focusing his energy on doing his best today, because this is what results in perfect work, and helps him to forget his worries and regrets. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prayed a *du'aa'*, or taught it to his ummah, he encouraged them not only to seek the help of Allaah and hope for His blessings, but also to work hard and strive to achieve the protection they prayed for, for *du'aa'* goes hand-in-hand with effort. Thus the slave will strive for whatever benefits him in his religion or his worldly affairs, and will ask his Lord to grant him the result for which he is aiming. He asks Allaah for help, just as Abu Hurayrah reported: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of

Allaah be upon him) said: 'The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allaah than the weak believer, and both are good. Pay attention to that which could benefit you, seek the help of Allaah and do not feel incapacitated. If anything befalls you, do not say, "If only I had done such-and-such, such a thing would have happened." Say instead, "It is the decree of Allaah, and what He wills, He does," for saying "if only…" opens the way for Shaytaan.'"

Thus the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) established a link between, on the one hand, his command to strive for beneficial things in every situation, seeking the help of Allaah, and not giving in to feelings of inadequacy which the harmful kind of laziness, and, on the other, giving in to regret for things in the past which are over and done with, and thinking about the will and decree of Allaah. He described things as being of two types: things which the slave can strive to achieve either in totality or as much as he can, or can protect himself from them, or lessen their impact, by making an effort and seeking the help of Allaah; and others about which he cannot do anything, so he should accept them and be content. Undoubtedly, paying attention to this principle will bring about happiness and dispel worry and distress.

The hadeeth quoted above indicates that one should strive to eliminate the causes of distress and bring about causes of happiness, by forgetting about bad things in the past that cannot be changed, and by realizing that to spend too much time thinking about such an impossible task is a foolish and crazy waste of time. So one should try not to think about it, and try not to feel anxious about the future or imagine fear and poverty that may or may not lie ahead. We should realize that the future, whether good or bad, is something unknown; it is in the hands of the Almighty, All-Wise, not in the hands of His slaves, and all they have to do is to strive for the good things and protect themselves from bad things. The slave should know that if he distracts his mind from worries about the future and puts his trust in his Lord, then Allaah will take care of it and his worry and anxiety will disappear.

11. One of the most effective ways of finding comfort and contentment is to remember Allaah frequently

Dhikr (remembrance of Allaah) has a wonderful effect in calming the soul and relieving stress and worry. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "… *Verily, in the remembrance of Allaah do hearts find rest.*" [al-Ra'd 13:28]

The greatest phrase of *dhikr* that can relieve the distress of death is: "*Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah* (there is no god except Allaah)." This is what Talhah told 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him: "I heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say a word which no slave says at the time of death but Allaah will ease his distress and brighten his colour. It was only the fear that I might not be able to do it that prevented me from asking him about it before he died." 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "I know what it is." Talhah asked, "What is it?" 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "Do you know any word greater that what he told his uncle to say? – '*Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*'." Talhah said, "That's it, by Allaah, that's it!"

12. Seeking refuge in prayer

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "*And seek help in patience and al-salaat (the prayer)…*" [al-Baqarah 2:45].

Hudhayfah said: "Whenever the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was grieved by something, he used to pray." When Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) heard about the death of his brother, he stopped at the side of the road – as he was on a journey – and prayed, following the command of Allaah.

13. Another thing that may dispel worry is jihaad for the sake of Allaah.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "You must strive in jihaad for the sake of Allaah, may He be blessed and exalted, for it is one of the gates to Paradise, and Allaah dispels worry and distress through it."

14. Speaking about the blessings of Allaah, both those which are obvious and those which are hidden

Acknowledging them and speaking about them dispels worry and distress. The slave is encouraged to have the attitude of thankfulness, which is the highest level he can reach, even if he is in a state of poverty, sickness or other kinds of misery. If he were to compare the innumerable blessings that Allaah has bestowed upon him with the bad thing that has befallen him, he will see that the distress is as nothing in comparison to the blessings. When Allaah tests His slave by means of these disasters and miseries, and the slave does his duty of being patient and accepting, then the difficulties become easy for him to bear, and he has the hope of earning reward from Allaah for submitting to Him, and being patient and content. This makes bitter things sweet; the sweetness of the reward helps him to forget the bitterness of patience.

One of the most beneficial things in this regard is to follow the advice of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) given in the saheeh hadeeth reported by Abu Hurayrah: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Look at those who are below you, not at those who are above you, so that you will not think little of the blessings that Allaah has bestowed upon you."

If a person keeps this important concept (of looking only at those below him) in mind, he will definitely feel that he is better-off than many others when it comes to good health, physical strength, and provision (*rizq*) such as food, clothing, shelter, etc., no matter what his situation. So his anxiety and distress will disappear, and he will feel

increased happiness and joy in the blessings of Allaah which have raised him above others.

The more he thinks about the blessings of Allaah, both obvious and hidden, spiritual and worldly, he will see that his Lord has given him many good things, and has lifted from him many bad things. No doubt this too will dispel worries and anxieties, and bring joy and happiness.

15. Keeping oneself busy with useful work or the pursuit of beneficial knowledge

This will distract a person's mind from the matter that has been causing anxiety. Maybe then he will forget the causes of his distress, and begin to feel happier and more energetic. This is something which both believers and non-believers may try to do, but the believer is distinguished by the fact of his *eemaan* (faith), his sincerity and his hope for reward when he occupies himself with learning or teaching something useful or doing something beneficial. If he is keeping himself busy with worship, then this is worship, and if he is keeping himself busy with some worldly work or custom, then he tries to accompany it with the right intention, and seeks the help of Allaah to do this thing as an act of obedience or worship to Him. Thus his action will be effective in dispelling his anxiety, stress and grief. How many people are suffering from anxiety and constant feelings of depression, which result in various kinds of disease and illness. The right treatment for them was: to forget the thing that caused the depression and worry, and to keep themselves busy with some important work. It was important that the work with which they kept themselves busy was something that they liked to do and looked forward to; this was more effective in bringing about the desired good results. And Allaah knows best.

16. Looking for the positive aspects of the events in which he tends to see only things that he dislikes

Abu Hurayrah said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'No believing man should hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one aspect of her character, he will be pleased with another.'"

The benefits of this hadeeth include: lifting anxiety and stress, preserving tranquillity, continued upholding of the duties which are either obligatory or encouraged, and the achievement of peace between the two parties. Anyone who is not guided by the Prophet's words, but does the opposite, will see only the negative aspects of a situation, and will be blinded to the positive aspects. So it is inevitable that he will become anxious and depressed, the relationships between him and those with whom he is in close contact will turn sour, and he will neglect many of the mutual duties that both parties should pay attention to.

17. Understanding the true value and shortness of this life, and that time is too precious to be wasted in stress and anxiety

The wise person understands that his true life is one of joy and contentment. Life is very short, and he should not let himself get carried away with distress and depression that will make it even shorter. This goes against the true idea of life, so he is reluctant to spend too much of his life in distress and depression. In this regard, there is little difference between the righteous and the rebellious, but the believer can achieve this in the best way, in a way that benefits him both in this world and in the Hereafter. When misfortune strikes, or when he is afraid of something bad happening to him, he should also compare the blessings that he enjoys, both spiritual and worldly, with whatever misfortune has befallen him. When he does this, he will see just how much blessing he has, and the bad things will be put into perspective. Similarly, he can make a comparison between the thing he fears will harm him and the far greater possibility that he will be kept safe from it: the faint possibility that

he may be harmed is far outweighed by the greater positive possibilities, and so his anxiety will be relieved. He takes into account the most likely scenario so that he can try to prepare himself in case it does happen, and he takes measures to protect himself against things that have not happened, or to alleviate or reduce the impact of things that have happened.

18. Another beneficial measure is not to allow one's work and other duties to accumulate

This means taking decisive action immediately, so that one is free to deal with whatever comes up in the future, because things that are not dealt with immediately pile up and are added to previous work that should have been done, thus making the burden even heavier. If you deal with everything at the right time, you will be free to deal with whatever lies ahead with a focused mind and adequate strength.

You should prioritize your work in order of importance, and try to choose things that interest you and that you enjoy, otherwise you will become bored and fed up. You can help yourself to achieve this by thinking clearly and consulting others, for one need never regret consultation. Study what you want to do in depth, and once you are sure about what action is needed to achieve your interest and have resolved to go ahead, then put your trust in Allaah, for Allaah loves those who put their trust in Him.

19. Constantly anticipating and being prepared for all possibilities

If a person is prepared for the possibility of the loss of a loved one, the sickness of a relative, incurring a debt, being overpowered by an enemy, or any other unpleasant possibility that has not yet happened – whilst seeking refuge with Allaah and hoping to be safe from it – then if his fears materialize, their impact will not be so great because he has already anticipated them and prepared himself to deal with them.

One important point that we should make is the fact that many ambitious people are prepared to deal with major calamities in a calm and patient manner, but they are unduly worried and stressed by trivial problems. The reason for this is that they prepare themselves to face major problems, but forget to prepare themselves to cope with minor troubles, which consequently cause them harm. The prudent person prepares himself to deal with both major and minor problems, and asks Allaah to help him and not leave him to deal with it by himself for even the blink of an eye. Thus both major and minor troubles become easier to bear, and he remains calm and serene.

20. Another remedy is to complain to religious scholars and ask them for advice

Their advice and opinions are among the things that can be of the greatest help in remaining steadfast at times of calamity. The Sahaabah used to complain to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about the torture they were suffering…

Khabbaab ibn al-Aratt (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "We complained to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he was reclining on his cloak in the shade of the Ka'bah. We said to him: 'Why do you not ask Allaah to help us (grant us victory)? Why do you not pray to Allaah for us?' He said, 'A man from the people before you would be placed in a hole dug for him, then they would bring a saw and cut his head in two, yet that would not make him renounce his faith. They would use an iron comb to drag the flesh and nerves from his bones, yet that would not make him renounce his faith. By Allaah, this matter will be completed (i.e. Islam will be perfected and will prevail) until a rider travelling from Sana'aa' to Hadramawt will fear nobody but Allaah or the attack of a wolf on his sheep, but you are too impatient.'"

The Taabi'een also complained to the Sahaabah. Al-Zubayr ibn 'Adiyy said: "We came to Anas ibn Maalik and complained to him about what we were suffering at the hands of al-Hajjaaj. He told us: 'Be patient, for there will come no time but the time after it is worse, until you meet your Lord. I heard that from your Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).'"

So the Muslim will hear from the scholars and leaders words which will help him and alleviate his pain, distress and anxiety.

Similarly, one can also seek the help of sincere brothers, wise relatives and faithful spouses. When Faatimah (may Allaah be pleased with her) felt distress, she complained to her husband 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him). 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father) tells us the story: the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to visit Faatimah, but he found a curtain over her door, so he did not enter. It was very rare for him to enter without greeting her so when 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) came, he saw that she was worried and upset. He asked, "What is the matter?" She said, "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to me, but he did not come in." So 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) went to him and said: "O Messenger of Allaah, Faatimah feels very upset because you came to her but you did not come in." He said, "I have nothing to do with these worldly things and fancy decorations." So 'Ali went to told Faatimah what the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had said. She said, "Ask the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) what I should do with it." He said, "tell her to send it to Banu So-and-so." (It was a curtain that was decorated with embroidery and so on).

Going to a man who is wise and has sound opinions can also help to dispel anxiety.

Al-Mugheerah, the freed slave of al-Waleed, said: "I entered upon al-Waleed and found him looking worried. I asked, 'What is worrying you, O *Ameer al-Mu'mineen*?' He said, 'The number of Muslims has increased, and the mosque is becoming too small

for them. I offered them money for the rest of this church, so that I could take it and add it to the mosque, to make the place big enough for the Muslims, but they refused.' Al-Mugheerah said: 'O *Ameer al-Mu'mineen*, I have an idea that may relieve your worry.' He asked, 'What is it?' I said: 'When the Sahaabah took Damascus, Khaalid ibn al-Waleed entered through the Eastern Gate, conquering by the sword. When the people heard of this, they rushed towards Abu 'Ubaydah (who was laying siege to another gate of the city), asking him for protection. He granted them protection, so they opened the Gate of Jaabiyah for him. Abu 'Ubaydah entered peacefully, having made a truce with the people. We should find out how far the military seizure of land reached, and take it, but the areas covered by the truce should be left in their hands. I hope that all of the church will be on land seized militarily, so that you can incorporate it into the mosque.' Al-Waleed said: 'You have made me feel much better. Take care of this matter yourself.' So al-Mugheerah took care of it; he surveyed the area extending from the Eastern Gate towards the Gate of Jaabiyah, as far as Sooq al-Rayhaan, and found that the military seizure of territory had continued as far as a little more than four cubits beyond the Great Arch, so the church could be incorporated into the mosque. So al-Waleed sent word to the Christians to tell them: 'The whole of this church lies in the territory which was seized militarily, so it belongs to us, not to you.' They said: 'Initially you offered us money and land, and we refused. Be generous and give us what you offered us originally, so that we may settle this matter peaceably, and we will give you the rest of the church.' So the matter was settled peaceably." (*Al-Badaayah wa'l-Nihaayah fi Seerat al-Waleed*).

21. The person who is distressed or worried should know that after hardship comes ease

So he should think positively and realize that Allaah will make a way out for him. The more intense his stress and depression is, the closer he is to relief and a way out.

Allaah says in Soorat al-Sharh (interpretation of the meaning): *"So verily, with the hardship, there is relief, verily, with the hardship, there is relief."* [al-Sharh 94:5-6]. In effect, hardship is mentioned once, and relief is mentioned twice, because the definite article ("*al*") indicates that the hardship mentioned in the first *aayah* quoted is the same as that mentioned in the second, whereas the fact that relief is mentioned in an indefinite form (with *tanween*) shows that the relief mentioned in the second *aayah* is different from that mentioned in the first.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) advised Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father): "Know that victory (or achievement) comes through patience, and that ease comes through hardship…"

22. Another remedy for distress is certain kinds of food

Al-Bukhaari (may Allaah have mercy on him) reports that 'Aa'ishah used to order *talbeen* for people who were sick or had been stricken by tragedy, and she would say: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say: '*Talbeen* warms the heart of the sick person and alleviates some of a person's grief.'"

Al-Bukhaari also narrated from 'Aa'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that whenever a member of her family died, and the women gathered together then dispersed, except for her family and close friends, she would ask for a pot of *talbeen,* then she would cook it, make *thareed* [a dish of sopped bread, meat and broth] and pour the *talbeen* over it, then tell the women: "Eat from it, for I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say that *talbeen* is the cure for the heart of the sick person and alleviates some of a person's grief."

Talbeen is a soup or broth made from flour or bran to which honey is added. It is called *talbeen* because it resembles milk (*laban*). It is cooked from ground barley.

Saying that it is a cure for the heat of the sick person means that it relaxes him, gives him energy and alleviates his grief and distress.

Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported that 'Aa'ishah said: "Whenever the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) heard that someone was sick or in pain, and not eating, he would say: 'You should make *talbeen* and let him sip it. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, it will cleanse the stomach of any one of you just as you wash the dirt from your faces with water.'"

Al-Tirmidhi reported that 'Aa'ishah said: "Whenever any member of his family fell ill, he would order that soup or broth be made for them, then he would tell them to sip it. He used to say, 'It makes the grieving heart strong and cleanses the heart of the sick person, just as any of you cleanses the dirt from her face with water.'"

Even though some people might find this strange, this is a true matter, as it has been proven to be part of the Revelation conveyed by the infallible Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Allaah has created all kinds of food, and He knows best their characteristics, so the soup of barley mentioned in the hadeeth is one of the types of food that make people feel better. And Allaah knows best.

With regard to the method of cooking this food for the person who is physically sick or whose heart is stricken with grief, Ibn Hijr (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "What suits the sick person is the water from barley that has been cooked whole, and what suits the grieving person is the water from ground barley that has been cooked. And Allaah knows best."

WRITINGS OF IMMAM IBN AL-QAYYIM ON TREATING DISTRESS & GRIEF

Following this discussion of cures, we will pause to look briefly at the list written by Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) in which he lists fifteen kinds of remedies through which Allaah may alleviate distress and grief:

1. Tawheed al-Ruboobiyyah (Unity of Divine Lordship)
2. Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah (Unity of Divinity)
3. Unity of belief, i.e. Tawheed al-Asmaa' wa'l-Siffaat (Unity of the Divine Names and Attributes).
4. To declare that Allaah is far above mistreating His slave or punishing him without any cause on the part of the slave himself.
5. Admission on the part of the slave that he is the wrongdoer.
6. Beseeching Allaah by the best of things, which are His Names and Attributes. Among the most comprehensive in meaning of His Names and Attributes are the Names al-Hayyu (the Ever-Living), al-Qayoom (the Eternal).
7. Seeking the help of Allaah Alone.
8. Putting one's hope in Allaah.
9. Putting one's trust in Allaah and handing over all one's affairs to Him, recognizing that one's forelock is in His hand, that Allaah runs all one's affairs as He wills, that His command is ever executed and that His decree is just.
10. Reading Qur'aan and pondering its meaning, seeking consolation in it for all disasters, and seeking a cure in it for all diseases of the heart (i.e., spiritual or psychological diseases) for it washes away grief and heals his distress and anxiety.
11. Seeking the forgiveness of Allaah.
12. Repentance
13. Jihaad (striving for the sake of Allaah).

14. Salaat (prayer)

15. Admitting that one has no power or strength at all, and attributing them to the One Who holds them in His hand.

DU'AA' (SUPPLICATION)

We ask Allaah, may He be exalted, to keep us safe from distress, to grant us relief from depression and to alleviate our worries, for He is the All-Hearing Who answers prayers, He is the Ever-Living, Eternal.

REMINDER

Finally, let us remind ourselves that no matter how great and how numerous the worries and distress of this world may be, the distress and anguish of the Hereafter will be far greater. This includes that which will befall all people when they are gathered all together for Judgement. Al-Bukhaari (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I will be the master of all people on the Day of Resurrection. Do you know why I will be the master of all people? Allaah will gather together all the people, the first and the last of them in one place, in such a way that if a caller calls out to them, they will all hear him, and they will all be seen at once. The sun will be brought close to them, and they will feel more distress than they can bear. People will say, 'Can you see what has happened to you? Won't you see who can intercede for you with your Lord?' Then some of them will say to others, 'Let's go to Adam…'"

There will be no cure for distress and anguish on that Day unless one turns to Allaah today.

May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad and his Family and Companions, who are the best of people. Praise be to Allaah Who is overtaken by neither slumber nor sleep.

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